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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7302

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE

RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC

RUEHC/DEPT OF INTERIOR WASHDC

RUCPDC/NOAA NMFS WASHINGTON DC

RUEAEPA/HQ EPA WASHINGTON DC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

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RHMCSUU/NGIC INTEL OPS CHARLOTTESVILLE VA

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 001379

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STATE PASS TO NSF FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NEW DELHI EST OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 29 TO JULY 02, 2009

¶1. Below is a compilation of environment, science, and technology highlights from Embassy New Delhi for the week of June 29-July 2, 2009, including the following:

-- World Bank: Don't Require Deep Emission Cuts from India
-- India Against International Climate Change Monitoring, Carbon Tax
-- New Guidelines for Tiger Relocation
-- Fighting Poachers with Surveillance Aircraft
-- Conflicts of Interest at the MOEF
-- Lockheed Martin Awards for Innovative Indian Technology
-- Discussing the Future of IITs
-- A National Smart Card Identification System

ENVIRONMENT

World Bank: Don't Require Deep Emission Cuts from India

¶12. World Bank (EB) officials in India, discussing their yet to be released study "Low Carbon Growth in India", endorsed India's stance that it should not be required to undertake deep emissions cuts. Charles Cormier, World Bank India Team Leader for Environment and Water Resources, said that given existing technology and resource constraints, India's eleventh five year plan seemed to be an efficient low-carbon growth plan if implemented effectively. However, Cormier noted that India has been found lacking in past plan implementation. Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) Joint Secretary R.R. Rashmi was quick to point out that the report reaffirmed that India's growth path is sustainable, and also stressed that developed countries must lead the way in emission reductions and provide financial and technical assistance for adaptation and mitigation. ESTOff was not able to obtain a copy of the draft report, which Cormier said will be finalized and ready for public distribution in September.

India Against International Climate Change Monitoring, Carbon Tax

¶13. Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Minister of MOEF, told reporters at a press conference that India's national action plan on climate change will not be subject international scrutiny or monitoring, and that India would under no circumstances undertake any commitment for quantified reduction of greenhouse gases. He referred to the climate change bill passed in the US House of Representatives, and its clause to penalize imports from countries like India which do not undertake emission cuts, as "pernicious." Ramesh thanked President Barack Obama for asking the Senate to vote against the clause.

New Guidelines for Tiger Relocation

¶14. The Rajasthan Forest Department is facing media flak for its failure to conduct DNA analysis before relocating in June-July 2008 three tigers - a male and two females - to Sariska Tiger Reserve. The tigers turned out to be siblings, raising fears of potential inbreeding and instigating MOEF to revisit its tiger relocation policies. MOEF has approved a blueprint for tiger relocation prepared by MOEF's National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and experts from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) based on international guidelines. Under the new protocol, guidelines will be binding on every state, tiger relocations will be monitored by WII experts and forest department officials, and the NTCA will have the power to monitor the entire process.

Fighting Poachers with Surveillance Aircraft

¶15. Referring to Corbett National Park (CNP) as the Taj Mahal of
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National parks, Jairam Ramesh approved a USD 1.8 million Comprehensive Security Plan, including motion sensors and micro-light aircraft, to be implemented at CNP over the next six years. In the 2008 budget, then Finance Minister Mr. P. Chidambaram initiated a one time allocation of USD \$10 million to set up a Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) to patrol and protect tiger reserves. CNP is expected to have about 110 STPF members. Ramesh has suggested that 181 local tribal families be moved out of CNP and accommodated in the STPF as a means of employment and to reduce their dependence on forest resources. In a bid to reduce both poaching and strain on park resources, Ramesh suggested extending similar security programs to other parks and is also preparing a plan to relocate the nearly 100,000 families that currently inhabit tiger reserves across the country.

Conflicts of Interest at the MOEF

¶16. Jairam Ramesh has taken note of NGO demands for transparency amid complaints that several people serving on MOEF regulatory boards are also employees of companies whose projects the boards review, presenting serious conflicts of interest. One of the most blatant cases involves Mr. P. Abrahams, former Secretary Ministry of Power, who chairs MOEF's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) on river valley and hydro projects. Abrahams also serves on the board of six power companies whose projects have been reviewed since he began his tenure as chair of the EAC. The situation is similar at the MOEF's EAC on mines and coal-based power plants, and at the National Biodiversity Authority.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Lockheed Martin Awards for Innovative Indian Technology

¶17. Lockheed Martin recognized 15 Indian entrepreneurs for their innovative technologies, and provided them with a unique opportunity to commercialize those technologies and bring them to market. The "Lockheed Martin India Innovation Growth Program" is funded primarily by Lockheed Martin and managed in conjunction with India's Department of Science and Technology, the Federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Innovation, Creativity & Capital (IC2) Institute at the University of Texas, and the Indo-US

S&T Forum. The 15 winners will receive from Lockheed and IC2, at no cost to them, professional business development assistance as well as access to markets worldwide for their technologies. The winning technologies included a 4G wireless chip, nanotechnology-enabled medical and agricultural devices, electronics recycling capabilities, and a process for direct biodiesel generation from algae.

Discussing the Future of IITs

¶8. ESTOff attended a day-long workshop in which Mr. Kapil Sibal, Minister in Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) and previous Minister of Science and Technology, spoke about efforts to develop strategies and vision for the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). He said that while India was proud of their achievements the IITs needed to focus more on interdisciplinary research, improve their masters and PhD programs, and carry out high quality research that meets international standards, matches the nation's needs, and leads to growth in the economy. The workshop highlighted familiar issues to the rapidly expanding IIT system, including difficulties with academic planning, maintaining standards, shortage of faculty, resource sharing, development of infrastructure, and enhancement of research output. The workshop was attended by 12 of the 14 IIT directors, as well as staff from

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the National Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Information Technology, professors of IIT Delhi, and MHRD advisors.

A National Smart Card Identification System

¶9. The GOI announced plans to establish under the Planning Commission the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) led by Mr. Nandan Nilekani. The UIDAI will be responsible for providing smart card-based identification to all Indians. In addition to using the smart-cards for security and population counts, the GOI also hopes they will prevent pilferage and ensure prompt and fair delivery of assistance programs such as rural employment, publically distributed food supplies, and health care. The project is expected to cost about INR 1,500 billion (USD 31.5 billion), and technological challenges in creating tamper-proof smart cards capable of handling Indian conditions are expected. According to press reports, the GOI may exclude private companies from participating due to the large amount of confidential information involved in the program. The public sector company Bharat Electronics Limited has already issued over 120,000 smart cards under a GOI pilot project to establish a multipurpose national identity card, and is likely to be one of the key players.

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